

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-07 L-03 NSC-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-04 RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 SPC-03

SAB-01 TRSE-00 SS-20 OPR-02 AID-20 DRC-01 /119 W

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R 171541Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5007

INFO AMEMBASSY PANAMA

USCINCSO

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USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, AR, PN, US

SUBJ: PRESIDENT TORRIJOS VISITS ARGENTINA

1. SUMMARY: SO FAR, MOST SIGNIFICANT RESULT OF TORRIJOS' VISIT HAS BEEN NOT UNEXPECTED STATEMENT OF PERON EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR PANAMA'S POSITION IN ITS DISPUTE WITH US OVER CANAL. PERON SAID PANAMA HAD SOVEREIGN RIGHT TO CANAL AND US SHOULD TURN IT OVER WITHOUT CONDITIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. PANAMANIAN PRESIDENT OMAR TORRIJOS ARRIVED IN BUENOS AIRES JAN 15 AND WAS MET AT AIRPORT BY VICE-PRESIDENT ISABEL DE PERON. MORNING JAN 16 PRESIDENTS PERON AND TORRIJOS AND STAFFS HAD TWO-HOUR MEETING IN OLIVOS DURING WHICH, ACCORDING TO THEIR SUBSEQUENT STATEMENTS, THEY DISCUSSED BROAD RANGE OF INTERNATIONAL ISSUES INCLUDING PANAMA'S DISPUTE WITH US OVER THE CANAL.

3. IN MEETING WITH NEWSMEN FOLLOWING MEETING, PERON SAID TORRIJOS HAD REPORTED ON STATE OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH US AND HAD BEEN OPTIMISTIC. PERON, TOO, EXPRESSED HOPE THAT US WOULD MEET PANAMA'S LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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JUST DEMAND THAT CANAL BE RETURNED. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT

"IF THEY DO NOT TAKE MEASURES TO DO WHAT PANAMA WANTS, IT WILL BE AN INJUSTICE AND AN ARBITRARY ACT WHICH SOME DAY LATIN AMERICA WILL HAVE TO CONFRONT AS A PROBLEM FOR THE WHOLE HEMISPHERE." PERON WENT ON TO SAY THAT THAT WHICH HAD BEEN ENTERED INTO AT EARLIER MOMENT IN HISTORY NO LONGER CORRESPONDED TO CONDITIONS OF TODAY. HENCE, US SHOULD RETURN CANAL AS ACT OF DECOLONIZATION. HE SAID THE BIG POWERS LIKE THE US AND GREAT BRITAIN (REFERRING HERE TO THE MALVINAS ISLANDS) AS WELL AS THE SMALL ONES MUST OBEY THE MANDATES OF THE UNITED NATIONS WHOSE REPUTATION IS AT STAKE IN ENFORCING ITS PLEDGE TO END COLONIALISM.

4. PERON INDICATED HE AND TORRIJOS HAD ALSO DISCUSSED LATIN AMERICAN UNITY AND HAD AGREED THAT LATIN AMERICA MUST BEGIN FORMATION OF NEW ORGANIZATION WHICH WOULD ALLOW THE VARIOUS COUNTRIES TO FACE COMMON DESTINY IN UNITY AND SOLIDARITY.

5. RESPONDING TO QUESTION AS TO WHETHER "NEW DIALOGUE" SUGGESTED BY SECRETARY KISSINGER COULD RESULT IN NEW RELATIONSHIP

WITH US, PERON SAID HE SINCERELY HOPED SO. DIALOGUE SO FAR HAD NOT BEEN CONSTRUCTIVE BUT HOPEFULLY IT WOULD BE IN FUTURE. PERON SAID HE HOPED THIS WOULD BE CASE, AS MUCH FOR NORTH AMERICA AS FOR SOUTH.

6. TORRIJOS SPENT REST OF JAN 16 LAYING WREATHS. AT RECEPTION LAST NIGHT, HE AND PRESIDENT PERON EXCHANGED DECORATIONS.

7. ARGENTINE LEFT HAS GREETED TORRIJOS WITH ENTHUSIASM AS A HERO IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST IMPERIALISM. ON EVENING OF HIS ARRIVAL PERONIST YOUTH MARCHED TO PLAZA HOTEL, WHERE TORRIJOS IS STAYING, AND THEN HELD DEMONSTRATION IN SUPPORT OF PANAMA'S POSITION ON CANAL. US FLAG WAS BURNED IN PROCESS. TORRIJOS SUBSEQUENTLY RECEIVED PERONIST YOUTH REPS AND INVITED THEM TO VISIT PANAMA.

8. COMMENT: PERON OBVIOUSLY IS USING VISIT TO IMPROVE HIS IMAGE WITH LEFT AND TO STRENGTHEN HIS CLAIM TO LEADERSHIP OF LATIN AMERICAN NATIONALISM. HIS UNCONDITIONAL SUPPORT OF PANAMANIAN POSITION GOES BEYOND THE REQUIREMENTS OF HIS ROLE AS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HOST, BUT IS CONSISTENT WITH HIS THIRD WORLD POSITION. IN VOICING IT, HE DID NOT ENGAGE IN PYROTECHNIC ANTI-AMERICANISM OR SENSATIONALISM. TORRIJOS' STATEMENTS ALSO HAVE BEEN QUITE MEASURED. THE RECENTLY ARRIVED AT GUIDELINES FOR THE CANAL NEGOTIATIONS APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN MOST TIMELY IN DEFUSING THE SITUATION. KREBS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESIDENT, DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS INTERRUPTION, VISITS, CANALS, MEETINGS, NEGOTIATIONS, PRESS CONFERENCES, SOCIAL RECEPTIONS, IMPERIALISM
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 JAN 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MorefiRH
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974BUENOS00419
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: |
Film Number: n/a
From: BUENOS AIRES
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740136/aaaabhnh.tel
Line Count: 113
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MorefiRH
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 06 SEP 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <06 SEP 2002 by cunninfx>; APPROVED <10-Sep-2002 by MorefiRH>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRESIDENT TORRIJOS VISITS ARGENTINA
TAGS: PFOR, OVIP, AR, PN, US, (TORRIJOS HERRERA, OMAR)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005